

By Don Oberdorfer

Washington Post Staff Writer

Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky yesterday expressed deep satisfaction with his White House Meeting Tuesday with President Carter and Vice President Mondale, calling it "an event of considerable historical significance" that probably already is having an impact on the Soviet people.

Speaking to reporters in the living room of a friend's northwest Washington residence, Bukovsky said millions of ordinary Russians have doubtless heard about his White House visit through foreign radio broadcasts. "I'm sure they will find much encouragement and hope and strength in this," he said through an interpreter.

The 34-year-old Bukovsky, who was in a Soviet prison camp ten weeks ago, admitted to being "tense" at being ushered into the presence of the top officials of the U.S. government. "I took it (the meeting) with a very great sense of responsibility... feeling responsible for all those who are still in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This weighs very heavily on me," he said.

Bukovsky said he placed no significance in the fact that press photographers were limited to pictures of himself with Mondale, with no opportunity to photograph him with the President. "I saw no evidence whatever of any desire on the part of the administration to belittle the event. The Soviet authorities couldn't care less whether we were photographed together, or whether we kissed. What counts is that we met," he said.

Bukovsky said a White House photographer took pictures of him with the President. No such photograph has been distributed for publication, however.

Bukovsky was freed from prison in December in a trade for imprisoned Chilean Communist leader Luis Corvalan. After a few more days in Washington, he plans to go to New York for about a week and then to take up residence in Europe.

The former prisoner said he expects to write a book and sometime next year to resume his studies of biology at Cambridge University. He was studying biology at Moscow University in 1961 when he was expelled for involvement in dissident activities. Since then he has spent 11 years, nearly a third of his life, in Soviet prisons and mental hospitals.

Bukovsky said he was not surprised by Soviet statements attacking him and belittling Carter's human rights campaign, and indicated he expects that "it can get worse" for dissidents in the Soviet Union in the short run as a result of Soviet government policy. The long-run reaction, he said, would depend in large part on how constant and firm U.S. policy turns out to be.

"I am deeply, deeply satisfied by the President's statement that his administration's commitment to human rights is permanent, and that he does not intend to be timid in his public statements and positions," Bukovsky said.

Calling for more than words in the cause of human rights, Bukovsky said the U.S. government, business and labor should condition further trade with the Soviet Union on progress toward greater human freedom within the Soviet system. He said his ultimate objective is not to provide a model for a new Soviet system, but "to make it possible for people to express themselves within the Soviet Union."

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Bukovsky, on Years Without a Dream of Freedom

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The following interview with Vladimir Bukovsky, by Peter Williams of Thames Television's "This Week," took place in London a few weeks after Bukovsky was released from a Russian prison on December 18, in exchange for the Chilean communist leader, Luis Corvalan.

Question: Vladimir Bukovsky has spent 11 of the last 14 years in Russian prisons. He is now 34 years old. He first smuggled to the West the names of some of those people who were criticizing the Soviet regime and who had been confined and tortured in prison mental hospitals for expressing their opposition.

It was for things as innocuous as organizing exhibitions of abstract paintings and, with his friends, reading poetry in public that Bukovsky was first in trouble with the authorities. For this, he was expelled both from school and later from his university. Born in 1942, Bukovsky was old enough to know of the repression and mass murders of the Stalinist era.

Bukovsky: So many years, so many decades our people had been oppressed — not only oppressed but persecuted severely. So many mil-

lions of people had been killed selectively. This power, this authority, Soviet power: they killed everybody who could make any resistance, who could explain his own way of thinking and who could follow his own way of thinking, of believing. This terrible time created a very widespread fear in people. It created a very awful hypocrisy. For us in the Soviet Union it is not a question of political stand. It is a question of moral stand, being able to articulate his belief openly; to behave according to his beliefs, not to be afraid, no matter if you win in this battle or you lose it.

Q: Do you think that you have won or lost?

A: I can judge only from my subjective standpoint, you know, and for me it is a big victory not to be frightened, not to be forced to confess in the crimes I didn't do, not to betray my friends. Just to withstand all this pressure, all those years, it is a victory for human spirit, you know, and I cannot regard it as a political one. Maybe it is a big mistake of mine from the political standpoint. But I should like to underline: no people, no country, in which a Communist dictatorship has been established, ever found its way out of it. We have had no such example until now. My belief is that the single way

out of it is a human way, is a moral way, not political.

Q: At one of your trials, Mr. Bukovsky, you told the judge that whatever he did, you were still a free man inside. What did you mean?

A: Oh, it's a new layer of questions you're just raising now, because the main problem with us in the Soviet Union, and I suppose in other socialist countries, is the inner freedom of persons. I am convinced that the real beginning of freedom is inside a man, not outside of him.

Q: What forces would you look for then to help the people who, inside Russia, are expressing dissent with the Soviet authorities?

A: I think that every honest person, every honest man in the world can help us in our struggle, and I have to say that I'm very glad to see now in the Western countries that so many persons know it now, and try to help us. But not the governments who would decide this problem — because of their sly positions, their hypocritical ways of dealing with Soviet power. No, on the contrary, they will only exaggerate it; they will only worsen it, because they demonstrate not honest positions. They demonstrate not strength to us and to any other persons involved, but demon-

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strate a very weak position which creates, which instigates, in Soviet powers, impunity.

Q: Bukovsky was first arrested in 1963 for photocopying a book by the dissident Yugoslav communist, Milovan Djilas. Because he denied committing any offense, he was sent without trial to a prison psychiatric hospital in Leningrad, and began to gather, firsthand, evidence of psychiatric abuse — of drugs used not as treatment but as punishment because of their painful side-effects. The psychiatrists in Leningrad debated whether Bukovsky's "madness" was schizophrenia — or a family characteristic. But that he was mad was a decision already taken elsewhere.

A: It was just an academic dispute, I suppose, because the real issue had been tackled in another way — in the way of KGB opinion, because before my arrival the question had been solved, I suppose.

Q: What do you mean? They knew they were going to rule you insane before you arrived at . . .

A: Yes, yes, and my interrogator, my inquisitor told me openly that they are sure of my illness and they are sure I will be locked in a psychiatric asylum and treated, and they

had been sure in this matter before my being examined.

Every person who dissents against the established line of thinking, according to their science, is not good, is not quite sane, because all this society, so many persons cannot make such a big mistake, you know — with a group or single person dissenting with them, then the single explanation of his way of thinking is an illness.

Q: So the majority must be right.

A: Yes, of course.

Q: And the minority must be mad.

A: They never applied this view to the Western society; they regard it in another way. They think that in the Western countries of course some personalities can be right, even if they are not in consent with the majority. Because your capitalistic system is not in line with human conscience, you know.

Q: What were conditions like for you in the psychiatric hospital?

A: I'm afraid it's difficult to explain. The main thing I suppose had been the hypocrisy, because everybody knew quite well, medical staff and prisoners, that it is not a question of insanity; it is a question of political persecution. But they tried to

play with this situation, and medical staff and prisoners accepted this language, this cant of psychiatry.

Q: You've described this time of your life as being a visit to hell.

A: Ah, hell. Who knows what it is, hell. And which punishment one will receive in it. I suppose in any place a man can be adapted, even in hell. I think when I recollect my years in psychiatric asylum, I remember now not so many of these punishments, as my friends who had been with me, their sufferings of course.

Q: When he was released, he didn't forget those friends. He served a number of terms in prison for, among other things, taking part in demonstrations for the release of other dissidents. He compiled a document — the first expose of the abuse of psychiatry to torture political prisoners. It listed eight cases, including his own, all active workers for human rights who had experienced compulsory psychiatric treatment. The document was released to the outside world, in Paris, on March 10, 1971. Nineteen days later, Bukovsky was arrested, yet again — it was inevitable that it should be so —

A: Yes, of course. I knew it quite

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well, but there is a single way to do anything. I suppose that maybe from the standpoint of Western people this situation is impossible. But in the Soviet Union the real possibilities are open only after this — after everything is impossible from an ordinary standpoint, you know. When you're breaking through the impossibility, there is a single way to do anything. Of course, so many persons knew quite well that after their doings, after their activities, they will be punished, and imprisoned and other things. But they have no other way now. There's a single way to attract attention, to make public our problems: we have no free press, we have no public opinion, real public opinion, in the Soviet Union. We have to use the free press of Western countries for our purposes, to publish in them our materials.

Q: The first two years of Bukovsky's 12-year sentence were to be in Vladimir Prison, near Moscow.

It's a top-security prison. Prisoners receive two visits a year — one letter a month. Bukovsky spoke up for the prisoners' rights — and spent much of his time in solitary confinement, in punishment cells, as did many of his fellow prisoners.

A: I cannot explain easily, plainly, what it is like. I can just detail some features of it. For example, we had instead of a toilet the hole in the floor, which had no — which hadn't been isolated out of the sewage system, and because of this all the stench, all the stink out of all the sewage system incessantly flowed to the cell, you know. And in the cell we have no ventilation. Ah, it is not according to rules to have ventilation.

Q: In 1975 and 1976, when you were on hunger strike, your mother said that she feared, and many of your friends in the West also feared, that you might die. What was it like for you?

A: We have several kinds of punishment with hunger, with starvation, and among the punishments they have such things as feeding the punished person every alternate day with a very low ration; and on other days they feed such punished persons only with a piece of bread and water. Besides it, the time of walk in the fresh air is shortened to half an hour and other restrictions are put on a punished person. And especially when, in the punishment cell, when we have no place to lay down during the day, and so much dirt; and when you are put in the same cell in which they had ill persons before you, tuberculosis, so many diseases, you know, so many dangers to be ill, to contract the illness.

And other things. I cannot embrace all the details. I suppose it will demand a whole book to discuss and describe all these different punishments and different ways of oppression, and I think now, the most important point from this is that all these things, all these measures are

taken against persons, political prisoners, in an attempt to change their attitude, to change their belief, to change their political views and opinions.

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Q: From Vladimir Prison, Bukovsky was sent, for a time, to a labor camp at Perm. There he met Semyon Gluzman, a young psychiatrist who'd been sentenced to ten years for publishing his belief that some of the imprisoned dissidents were not mad at all. Between them, at the labor camp, Bukovsky and Gluzman produced another remarkable document, The Manual on Psychiatry for Dissidents. This document warns of the methods used by the KGB and how to cope with them. How did these two men manage to assemble this manual? Did they have writing materials?

A: Well, yes, really, we had, in the camp, a pencil and paper, but it was not a matter of having some implement, it was a matter of making it clandestinely enough not to be absorbed by informers or guards. That was a problem.

And so we made this report, not written, but we discussed all details about it and had all this text in our heads before we made it, you know. Afterward, after we made this report and our friends appreciated it greatly and told us it's very interesting, we decided to make it written and to send it outside of camp as a helpful paper, helpful advice and document for others.

Q: How did you send it out?

A: Ah, you know, I hadn't been there when my friend managed to send it. I cannot explain it, not only because I don't know the real way of it, but because I hope it is not the last paper they manage to send.

Q: Did you during the last 13 years at any time nearly lose your grip? Did you nearly want to give up under this pressure?

A: No, no, I think I never had such a problem. Because I regard — it is a difficult question because different types of persons regard their personality in different ways. For one person, his personality, his integrity, his instinct of self-defense, self-preservation consists of feeling, of an animal. You know, just to be alive, not to lose the strength. For me, the integrity of the personality and the self-preserving instinct is consistent, an attempt to be oneself — not to lose self-respect, dignity, and all the traits and all his inclinations and beliefs a person has.

Q: And yet surely it must have been so tempting to stop fighting, go free.

A: That is a problem of inner freedom about which you asked me, you know. A person who once arrived to this notion of inner freedom cannot change it. It is as impossible as, as self-destruction. It's more easy to commit suicide than to change his beliefs.

Q: Did you never dream, fantasize about release from prison, what it would be like?

A: I don't know. I never dreamed about being released, as I have been released in exchange for Corvalan. It's really so. I never dreamed about it as a way of making any recantation, no. I never thought about it.

Q: But did you not dream at night of being in the world outside?

A: No, no. After so many years in prison you never see freedom in a sleep, in a dream. Usually you see such unpleasant things as you experience during the day, and the most pleasant thing for prisoners is not to be released, because he never dreams about it, but to have a contact with anybody, to receive a letter, to get an interesting book, maybe, and maybe to have a more comfortable cell. You know, in any dangerous or unpleasant or oppressive place, the most awful thing is that persons adapt to it, and get acquainted to it, and for them, the troubles of this place and some hopes connected with it — just little hopes — are more important than the big ones such as release, as liberation.

Q: Bukovsky himself, his health undermined by his imprisonment, tiring at the end of our interview, set aside his self-taught English to explain what he felt was the significance of his exchange with Corvalan.

A: It was a landmark first and foremost because it was an official recognition by the Soviet government that it holds political prisoners — the first time they've admitted this.

Secondly, it seems to me very important as a joint achievement, a joint victory for the campaigns for two political prisoners, who obtained freedom thanks to the widespread efforts of decent people.

In addition, the significance of the event is also in the fact that the Soviet government was forced to yield to the pressure of world opinion, admitting in the process that events occurring in the USSR — the suppression of the freedom of people in the USSR — are not simply an internal matter of the Soviet Union, and cannot be regarded as such.

Q: The Russians say they expelled Vladimir Bukovsky because of his crimes against the Soviet state, including organizing an armed group. Bukovsky points out that he's never been accused of that; speaking to us, he challenged the Russians to do so, in an international court.

As for the campaign waged by Bukovsky and his friends, it's been a success in that the eight people he first documented in 1971 have since been released — though one, Vladimir Borisov, was rearrested on Christmas Eve. But there are hundreds of other people in Russia still being persecuted for their political or religious beliefs — many of them unknown in the West.

Adapted from The New York Review of Books.



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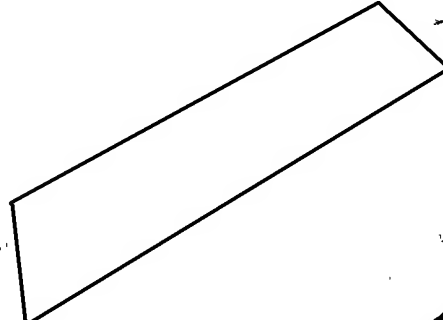
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Number, Street, City, Province (State) and Country of Permanent Residence 145 Gilbert Rd., Cambridge, England				
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